

Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan Revision
Public Information Webinar
August 9, 2011
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Twenty-nine members of the public participated in the webinar.

Meeting Purpose and Overview

The USDS Forest Service (Forest Service) hosted a public information webinar for the Colville and Okanogan National Forest Plan Revision on August 9, 2011. The webinar provided the public an opportunity to learn about the Forest Service's proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, how they can comment on the proposals, how their comments will be used, and future opportunities for their involvement. Participants received an overview presentation on the Proposed Actions for revising the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest plans, and had an opportunity to ask questions.

Meeting Agenda

Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues facilitator, welcomed everyone and provided an overview of the agenda. She noted that participants can access more project-related information online.

Presentation

Margaret Hartzell, Team leader, presented the key concepts of the Proposed Actions. She explained that she would discuss proposed actions for both the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, with a slight emphasis on the Colville National Forest for the first webinar (and likewise for the Okanogan-Wenatchee at the second webinar). She provided a general overview; a process timeline; and *new* and *continued* goals of the Proposed Actions for the following categories:

- Aquatics and riparian systems
- Plants
- Vegetation
- Wildlife habitat
- Access
- Livestock grazing
- Recreation
- Renewable forest products
- Scenery
- Preliminary Wilderness recommendations

Margaret also explained the “tools” the plan uses, as well as how comments are being gathered and used in the process. Please see Attachment 1 for the presentation slides.

Questions & Responses

The following is a synopsis of questions (Q) / comments (C) and corresponding responses (R) from the webinar.

Q: 13 Mile Roadless Area has consistently been left out of wilderness consideration, though it received very high quality ratings in RARE II. I understand that wildfire issues are of a concern but they shouldn't override the wilderness attributes this area offers.

R: We do have concerns about wildfire issues in this area and want to continue to manage vegetation for safety issues around the town of Republic. There is concern about fire in that area. Also, the area has lots of old growth Ponderosa pine, which is easier to retain under active management.

Q: Can you please explain the Wilderness evaluation process?

R: The process we used is in the Forest Service handbook, which is posted in the “Reading Room” section of our website, and in Forest Service handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70 – The Wilderness Evaluation Handbook. It basically has three major components – whether the area is capable of being Wilderness; whether it's available to be managed as Wilderness; and whether or not it would contribute to need for additional Wilderness at a regional or national scale. The forest supervisor can recommend zero acres or all of the acres in an inventoried roadless area – or anything in between.

Q: Why are you not considering lands of particularly high quality to include in preliminary wilderness recommendations?

R: We addressed this from a “need” perspective – areas with more to contribute rose to the top for recommendation.

Q: Why do some materials say August 29 is the comment period deadline, and others say September 28?

R: At the release of the Proposed Actions plan, there was a 60-day comment period. After numerous requests to extend the deadline, we decided to extend the comment period an additional 30 days. September 28 is now the official close of the comment period.

Q: How will winter recreation be considered and addressed in the Forest Plan?

R: Winter recreation is considered in the Forest Plan in Backcountry and Backcountry-motorized management areas. Existing winter recreation will continue under the proposal – no changes are proposed. The Backcountry Management Area will be open to winter motorized use, per management direction in the current forest plan. Any changes considered in the future will be site-specific decisions.

Q: The way the Proposed Action is written, existing uses can continue in those areas recommended for wilderness until Congress acts. Is the intent to take away the (Region 6) Regional Forester's ability to manage it as Wilderness if he/she chooses, which has happened in some other regions? Does the language of the Forest Plan specifically preclude the ability of the regional forester to make a different decision in the future?

R: No; there is no national policy on how recommended Wilderness areas are to be managed; there are some differences among regions. Region 6 decided to allow activities to continue as long as they do not detract long-term from the Wilderness characteristics of the area. This is a different approach than what you might see in Region 1. The regional forester is the decision-making official for the forest plan. If there is a need to make a change to the forest plan in the future, an Amendment process would allow us to do so.

Q: I am looking at the Colville National Forest portion of the Proposed Actions and do not see any references to "low elevation" trails. Can you tell me where these are referred to in the Colville portion?

R: On page 42 of the Proposed Action for the Colville National Forest – in the Access section, and under "Trail Management," there's a bullet item that says "provide recreation opportunities for nearby communities by locating 5% of the trail system adjacent to communities, where practical." So, it does not actually say "low elevation," but the intent is to try to provide trails closer to communities.

Q: Will a copy of this presentation or webinar be available on the plan revision website?

R: The presentation will be available on the website, as well as a summary that documents questions and responses.

Q: Reading through the Proposed Action, it looks like the 2005 National Visitor Use monitoring data was used heavily. Are there any other sources of recreational data that you're considering in this process? Is there any other data collection method that you are going to use moving forward?

R: The main data we use is our own Forest Service research data, and that is what you are referring to with the National Visitor Use monitoring data. We also use the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) data as the next-most important and

comprehensive information source; and there are many other data sources including industry reports – all of which helped inform our process.

Q: In the Colville National Forest, the same areas have been consistently turned down as unfit for Wilderness for the past dozen years or so. What makes these areas now eligible?

R: The Forest Service itself has not recommended any Wilderness proposal for the Colville National Forest – or Okanogan-Wenatchee – since the late 1970s/ early 1980s. The passage of the 1984 Wilderness Act brought a close to any agency process for making Wilderness recommendations. So, the current Plan Revision process is the first time since then that the Forest Service has looked at any of these areas. Private individuals have made Wilderness proposals to congressional leaders in hopes of a legislative approach. This is not a process run by – or on behalf of – the Forest Service.

Q: Can you please explain how the Proposed Action is guided/ influenced by “additional data on recreation trends and use specific to the forest?”

R: In this process, one of the things we do is evaluate if our current forest plan is still working and responsive to the existing biological, ecosystem, and social conditions, etc. We collect data to test whether we are still offering settings and conditions where people can engage in their preferred kinds of recreational activities. For instance, the reference to providing more low-level, year-round, trails reflects a change in how people are recreating now, compared to the 1970s and 1980s.

We would also encourage you to look in the Access and the Recreation sections of the Proposed Actions. We do not use data to proportionally cater to a certain type of activity. Rather, it informs trends and future capacity. The Forest is not apportioned to certain types of activities, based on popularity or use in recreation trend reports.

Q: The Forest Service does not currently manage rangelands that reflect “good condition”. Livestock grazing on the Kettle Crest results in extensive resource damage. Livestock watering troughs are not maintained. The wetland on Columbia is destroyed. What changes will the Forest Service make to hold ranchers responsible?

R: We would be the first to acknowledge that we have problems on the Forest. We make a very good effort to manage our rangelands so that they are all in good condition. There are places that are not in good condition – and we will be working on them. We are heading toward writing a revised forest plan that makes the desired condition of our rangelands clear. This will help make it clear where we have a problem.

Specifically regarding the question about what the Forest Service will do to hold ranchers responsible, there is a range allotment system, which manages individual range allotments through permits and an Allotment Management Plan. These tools are used to address problems

in specific allotments. There are annual reviews and discussions about these allotments and associated permits.

C: The maps in the plan are incomplete. They need to show Forest Service roads and trails.

R: Noted. Also, we tried to have a balance between having maps that everyone would be able to download on their home computer system. The areas in discussion are 1 million (Colville) and 4 million acre (Okanogan-Wenatchee). We found in the past that if we add all of the Forest Service roads, we start to get a lot of complaints from people who can no longer download them because they take up so much memory. If you are having problems, we encourage you to come into a Forest Service office. Also, you can download the Google Earth file on our website for use on your own Google Earth application.

Q: You said that you did not recommend [for Wilderness designation] any areas with motorized trails. Does this include snowmobile trails?

R: There is one recommended Wilderness Area on the Wenatchee part of the Forest that contains groomed snowmobile trails. But, for the rest of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, there are no other groomed snowmobile trails within the Preliminary Wilderness Recommendations. However, some of the areas do receive snowmobile use; we tried to avoid recommending areas that we know have the most concentrated snowmobile use.

C/Q: Backcountry Non-motorized areas overlap several key watersheds, and include unroaded landscapes outlined in the 2001 Inventoried Roadless Areas and the potential wilderness areas. Current motorized trails are illegal and user-created. Why would the Forest Service allow motorized recreation in a roadless area?

R: This question seems to be based on the assumption that an Inventoried Roadless Area identified by the 2001 Roadless Rule comes with a prohibition on motorized use. However, there is no associated prohibition of motorized use in those areas.

The proposed Backcountry Non-motorized, or “Backcountry” Management Area is an area where there would no longer be authorized summertime motorized trails. The Forest Service would need to move toward removing those trails. In the Backcountry-motorized areas, we would continue to authorize summertime motorized trail use.

Q: Do you have a map – and if so, where can I find it – of the areas you may recommend for Congressional Wilderness designation?

R: We do have a map available on our website (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision>). Click the link to the Proposed Action, and scroll down and look for a set of maps.

Q: The Forest Service has a terrible time maintaining existing trails in wilderness areas. How do you plan to keep trails currently being cleared by mechanized use – or chainsaws – open if they become Wilderness?

R: We understand the presumption that if it is difficult to maintain the existing trail system, and we expand the Wilderness area in the Forest, it will be even more difficult to maintain the trail system. We would expect to have and maintain a trail system that is consistent with the funding we received. We also acknowledge the volunteers that help us with the trail maintenance. There are also other sources of funding, such as Northwest Forest Pass dollars, which contribute to our ability to maintain trails.

C: There is a provision in the Wilderness Act to utilize mechanized and motorized equipment for trail maintenance in Wilderness via the application of the minimum tool analysis, and this has been done recently Glacier Peak Wilderness and is currently ongoing in Colonel Bob Wilderness in Washington State. So, please remember that this is an option for the Forest Service in Wilderness.

R: It is not the Wilderness Act itself that directly says we can use motorized equipment for trail maintenance; it does say we can use motorized equipment when it is administratively necessary for the purposes of Wilderness. You are referring to a process we go through to determine if it is warranted to use motorized access/ equipment. This is called the minimum-requirements analysis, which is used situationally.

C: To follow-up, as far as I can remember, Region 6 has never allowed motorized use or chainsaws in the Pasayten Wilderness, with the exception of that administered by the National Park Service on the western side. We have requested that several times but have been turned down because the Forest Supervisor does not think that it fits within the Wilderness experience.

R: The Pasayten Wilderness area is managed by the Forest Service; the National Park service manages North Cascades National Park. The National Park Service is an entirely different federal agency. Accordingly, they may be using different regulations in the management of their areas than the Forest Service. When we get requests for using chainsaws in the Wilderness, we would use the minimum requirements analysis as a process to determine if we would allow chainsaws – or some other piece of equipment that would not normally be allowed in the Wilderness. I cannot confirm whether or not chainsaws have never been allowed; but it sounds like – based on your experience – the Forest Supervisor has arrived at the conclusion that the situation could be taken care of without using chainsaws.

Q: Will the August 18 webinar be the same as this webinar?

R: The presentation will be the same, but the questions and responses are dynamic, and will presumably be different.

Q: Colville forest managers granted a permit to a Colorado company to conduct guided bicycle tours of the Kettle Crest trail. The Kettle Crest is a National Recreation Trail designated by Congress and according to the Forest Service, the Crest qualifies as Wilderness. Yet, the Forest Service is recommending only the southern half. If the southern half is designated as Wilderness, how will the Forest Service keep bike riders out the Wilderness areas?

R: It is true that in trying to keep a continuous trail – like the Kettle Crest Trail – continuing into Wilderness, there will always be a risk of having an unauthorized use continuing into the Wilderness. The local ranger district would likely install some engineering controls (such as a turnstile-type gate) as well as signing to alert the biking public to that they are not allowed past a certain point.

C: There has been some information about the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition and the “balanced blueprint plan” they came up with. This coalition had been meeting for many years and includes many sectors of the community, and seemed to have a lot of community support for a plan. Did the Forest Service ever consider, or look at, this blueprint they developed?

R: The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition provided the blueprint to the Forest Service in the form of a letter and accompanying map, which included a description of the blueprint plan. They asked us to consider it as input in the process of revising the Forest Plan. We did consider it, as we also considered other input from various other groups as we prepared the Proposed Action. A reminder: we are in the first steps of the NEPA process; it is a proposed action, and we will be considering public input and making changes accordingly.

Closing

Susan thanked everyone for participating and noted that the summary notes from the conversation would be posted on the Forest Service website as they are available. She also mentioned that another webinar would be held on August 18 from 12 – 1:30 p.m. PST. The registration link is on the website. Anyone who is interested may join.

Margaret thanked everyone for their participation, and expressed her gratitude for the participants’ thorough consideration of the Proposed Actions and for asking great questions. She also encouraged everyone to submit written comments on the proposed actions.

The webinar ended at 1:30 p.m.

A list of meeting attendees is included in Attachment 2.

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

WELCOME!

COLVILLE AND OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST PLAN REVISION INFORMATION WEBINAR

Welcome to the webinar! Please stand by while we wait for others to join.
While waiting...

1. Be sure to enter your audio PIN so that you can participate in the discussion.
2. You will remain muted until called upon.
3. Experiencing technical difficulties? Please call Melissa at 208-869-2120.

Aug. 9, 2011 Forest Plan Revision

Welcome

- Webinar logistics
 - Raising your hand
 - Asking questions
 - For technical support, call Melissa at 208-869-2120
- For more information
 - [http:// www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision)
- Introductions

August 9, 2011

Webinar Purpose

- To provide an opportunity for you to learn about the Forest Service proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests.
- To provide information on how you can comment on the proposals, how your comments will be used, and to learn about future opportunities for your involvement.

August 9, 2011

Agenda

- 12:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions, Overview
- 12:10 p.m. Informational Presentation
- 12:40 p.m. Questions and Responses
- 1:25 p.m. How to Comment / Next steps
- 1:30 p.m. Adjourn

August 9, 2011

Informational Presentation

Margaret Hartzell,
Forest Plan Revision Team Leader

August 9, 2011

Why you should be involved

- Forest Plan Revision – Proposed Action public involvement
- June 30 to **September 28**, 2011

"Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."
- Forest Service Mission

August 9, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

What Plans Do...

- Describes desired
 - Habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and plants
 - Vegetation (trees, shrubs, range lands)
- Identifies areas suited for kinds of travel
 - on foot, motorized, or mechanized
- Recommend wilderness, determine eligibility of wild and scenic rivers
- Provide sideboards for projects
 - standards and guidelines

August 9, 2011

Plan Revision – the basics

- Managing expectations
- Bring current plan up-to-date as required by NFMA
- Cannot make changes to laws, regulations, the directives, policy



Umbrella
Operating framework for Forest

August 9, 2011

Time Line

- This summer – Proposed Action
- Summer 2012 – DEIS
- Summer 2013 – FEIS
- Fall 2013 – revised forest plan



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

- Aquatics and Riparian Systems
 - New – Key watersheds
 - Continuing – good water quality, riparian buffers, healthy riparian ecosystems



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

- Plants
 - Continue – preventing introduction and spread of invasive plants
 - Using native plants
 - Protecting unique habitats, rare plants, ESA species
 - Have healthy ecosystems



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

- Vegetation
 - New – role of disturbance in ecosystem; data on composition, structure, and spatial patterns
 - Continue – focus on ecosystem restoration and forest health, managing wildfire risks, contributing habitat



August 9, 2011



Attachment 1: Presentation slides

Proposed Action

Wildlife Habitat

- New – science to better describe habitat condition; Endangered Species Act (ESA) species
- Continue – high quality habitat, connectivity, and contributing to recovery of ESA species



August 9, 2011



Proposed Action

Access – roads and trails, docks and bridges

- Continue – safe, affordable, environmentally sound system of roads and trails
- Continue – range of recreational trails
- NOTE on the Travel Management process



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

Livestock Grazing

- Continue – range lands in good condition.



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

Recreation

- New – additional data on recreation trends and use specific to Forest
- Continue – offer quality, nature-based recreation in outdoor setting



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

Renewable Forest Products

- Special forest products, merchantable wood products
- Continue – provide firewood, saw timber, biomass, wood fiber
- Average annual timber harvest
 - Approximately 10,000 acres/year/forest
 - Colville: 25 to 35 million board feet
 - Okanogan-Wenatchee: 48 to 52 million board feet



August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

Scenery

- New – system that emphasizes actively managing to enhance and maintain
- Continue – provide beautiful scenery



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Attachment 1: Presentation slides

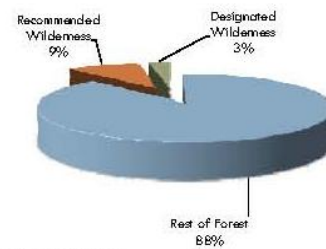
Proposed Action

- **Colville Preliminary Wilderness Recommendation**
 - Continue – Salmo-Priest Wilderness – 29,000 acres
 - New – preliminary recommendation of 101,000 acres.
 - Not final decision, existing uses can continue until Congress acts
 - Did not recommend areas with motorized trails, mining operations, wildland urban interface with dry forest, tools needed, not high quality



August 9, 2011

Colville NF



Percent of total Forest acres

August 9, 2011

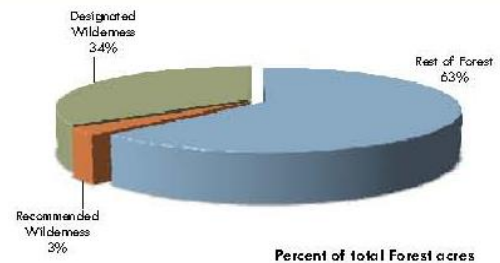
Proposed Action

- **Okanogan-Wenatchee Preliminary Wilderness Recommendation**
 - Continue – Designated Wilderness – 1,470,000 acres
 - New – preliminary recommendation of 125,800 acres.
 - Not final decision, existing uses can continue until Congress acts
 - Did not recommend areas with motorized trails, mining operations, wildland urban interface with dry forest, tools needed, not high quality



August 9, 2011

Okanogan-Wenatchee NF



Percent of total Forest acres

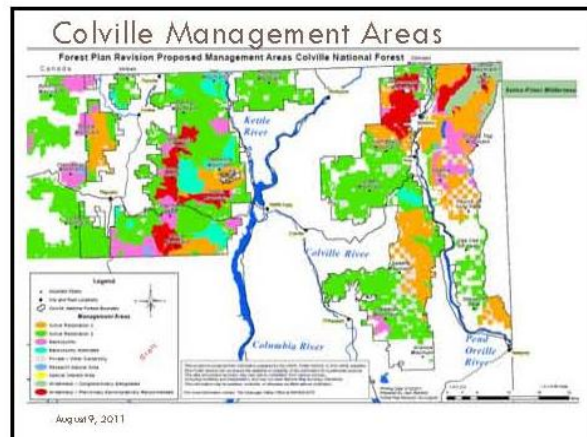
August 9, 2011

Proposed Action

- Tool the plan uses - Management Areas
 - Consistent with neighbors
 - Habitats move
 - New congressionally created trail – Pacific Northwest National Scenic

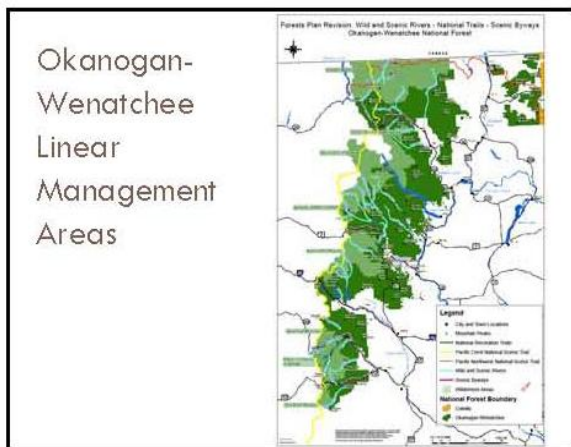
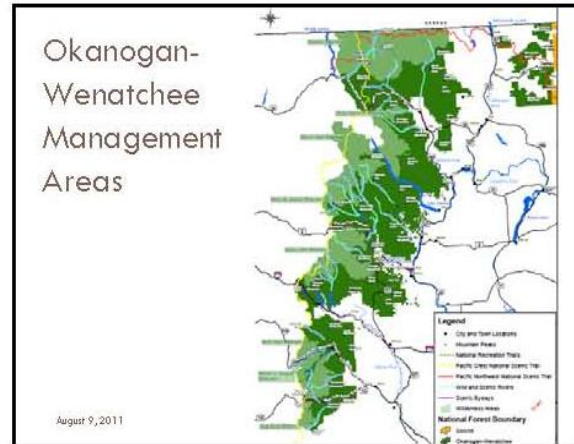
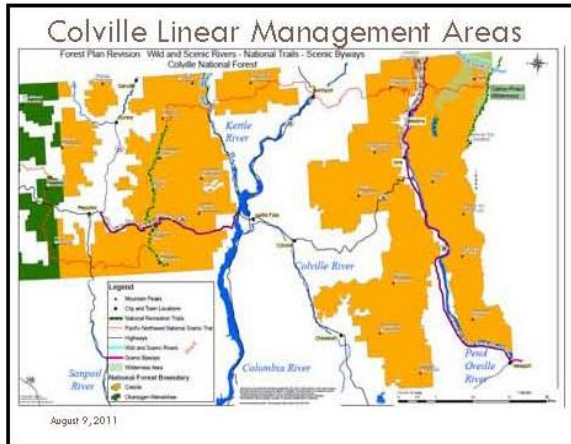


August 9, 2011



August 9, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides



Thank you for participating today!

- Send comments to:
Forest Plan Revision
Okanogan Valley Office
1240 Second Avenue South
Okanogan, WA 98840
- Email: ro_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us
- Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision>

Comments are most helpful if received by **September 28, 2011**.

August 9, 2011

Attachment 2: Forest Service Staff and Facilitation Team- Webinar Participants

Forest Service Staff

Name	Forest	City, State
Margaret Hartzell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Debbie Kelly	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Mark Loewen	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Wenatchee, WA
Andrea Lyons	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Wenatchee, WA
Lisa Therrell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Leavenworth, WA

Facilitation Team

Name	Affiliation	City, State
Caylen Beaty	EnviroIssues ¹	Seattle, WA
Susan Hayman	EnviroIssues	Boise, ID
Melissa Thom	EnviroIssues	Boise, ID

¹ Neutral public process outreach and facilitation company (www.enviroissues.com) working under the auspices of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (www.ecr.gov).